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May 26. About the place, playing with her baby.
May 27. Went to barter with other women at Tarongen, taking the baby with her.
May 28. Worked in the new taro garden.

The records of the girls are similar to those of the women, they search for shell-fish on the reef, or work in the taro garden, or look after some one's baby, with intervals of doing nothing in particular. The boys spend most of their time fishing, or hunting 'possum, or just playing in the bush, or they may help an older man to shape a dug-out canoe.

RECKONING OF TIME

The past of these people is enshrined for them in their numerous myths of origin, handed down from one generation to another, and called *maniio ua hãna*, 'stories of long ago'. They are concerned with the doings of culture heroes such as Morena, who instituted their clans, and taught them the arts of life, as described in Chapter II. Tales are also told of successful raids led by great fighting men, who are remembered by name for about two generations back, generally given with the comment: 'They used to eat man.' The era before the white man began to count as a factor in native life (some forty years ago) is sometimes referred to as 'the time of fighting'. The present is 'the time of the white man'.

As regards anything more definite than this, it is practically impossible to obtain any real information. The idea of reckoning an interval seems completely foreign to them. When I tried to find out any such thing as how long taro takes to ripen, or how long ago a certain man died, the majority of people would merely gaze at me in puzzled silence, no matter in what form I couched my queries. My most intelligent informant once said, in discussing these matters: 'We people do not know how to count time. We think in our bellies, that's all.' They take up a plant to find how near the taro patch is to being ready for use, they hold ceremonies when they think they have enough food available. A messenger, carrying a branch of areca-nuts, is sent round to the villages that are expected to attend it, and leaves a nut at each, as an indication that it is time to start. In days of old, this signal was also used as a request to join in a fight, either in defence or attack. If they wish to make an appointment to meet at the end of a designated period, say for purposes of barter, one party to the agreement will give

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the other party a length of fibre string with a knot tied in it for each day that is to elapse before the day appointed, keeping a similar string themselves, and each day one knot is cut off the string till all are gone. The knots in such a string are called *kabus*. I was told that sometimes a row of spears is struck into the ground and one removed each morning, but I did not see this done.

There is no division corresponding to our year.[1] The eagerly anticipated time when they can enjoy feasting upon the canarium almond is called 'the time of the almond', roughly from the middle of May to the end of August (the first almonds were brought to the village on May 14). I note that in the SE. Solomons that portion of the year not named after the almond is connected with the annelid *palolo*,[2] but if there is any such nomenclature in the district with which I am acquainted, it has escaped me, neither did I see any *palolo*.

They recognize the lunar month, *dʒiwau* (= moon). Only the more sophisticated natives seemed to use the 'moon' as a measure of time, and a statement that anything lasts for, or will happen in, a given number of moons nearly always turned out to have been a guess. Unfortunately, I neglected to make definite inquiries as to names for the lunar months. No spontaneous mention was made of any such in our discussions on kindred subjects, which indicates that, if used, they are not considered of very great importance.

The absence of any very well-defined 'nature calendar' may be partly accountable for their disregard of times and seasons. They speak of the 'time of rain' (*buey in a pit*), but seem to apply it whenever the weather is wet. Taro is cultivated all the year round, new plants being always put in as others are taken out for eating. The fact that two new gardens were prepared in June (as described in Chap. IX) was due to the forthcoming *watawutʃ* ceremony, for which a specially large quantity would be required.

The only unit of time that really matters is the day. Short intervals, past and future, are distinguished thus:

roman = to-day (e.g. *roman buey hin*, to-day is the time for work; *buey papo tuabus*, to-morrow is the time for idling).

[1] It is now beginning to be introduced owing to contact with missionaries and employers of labour, and is called a 'Christmas'. So too with the week, which is called a 'Sunday', no attempt being made to adapt any native word for the purpose, or to express the idea by a circumlocution.

[2] Ivens, 1927, p. 397, also reported from other parts of Melanesia, e.g. New Ireland (Powdermaker, 1933, p. 23), and Fiji (R. Thompson, 1908, p. 324), &c.

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failing him, brother, son, or other male relative, to provide fish for exchange. Sometimes a man would apologize for not selling me some fish for which I had asked him, on the ground that his wife would not have enough for the *toan* next day. A supply is sometimes prepared in advance by half-smoking the fish so that they will keep for a short time. Each woman's load is her personal property, and the goods for which she exchanges it are also her property, for the use of her own household. There is no pooling. If they are short of fish they will sometimes supplement it with sticks of tobacco.

I accompanied my friends from Petats on several trips to the mainland of Buka for this purpose. When the two parties met, packs were undone and a rapid inspection of fish and counting out of taro took place. The people of each party kept together; they went round holding out the goods they had to offer, and the buyers saw to it that the fish were of the appropriate size for the number of taro offered in exchange. I saw one woman try hard to obtain two small fish for four taro, but eventually she had to be content with one. Sometimes they would get very excited and snatch the fish and taro from each other, or two women would grab the same article, almost tearing it in pieces. Two of the Buka women brought loads of dried opossum, and these also were exchanged for fish. The whole affair was got over as quickly as possible; there was very little gossip, and it was clearly regarded as a business, not a social occasion. Both sides began their homeward journey as soon as the exchange was finished, not stopping to chat or to chew betel, though we usually sat down to do so as soon as we were well out of sight. Even now, there is a certain amount of distrust between the people of the coast and the people of the hills, though relations are outwardly friendly.

The fish-taro exchange is a permanent feature in the life of all the villages in this area. In the case of exchanges between distant villages, appointments are made from one meeting to the next by exchanging bits of string in each of which a knot has been tied for each day which is to elapse before the next excursion. Some specified individual is in charge of the string, and cuts off one knot each day till the time arrives. On the occasions on which I accompanied the party, we seldom waited for more than a short time before the other people arrived. Once, when they were rather longer in coming, some of the women wanted to go farther along

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water; cooking pots, bought from Malasang; and such baskets as they choose to make. Each woman also owns a hood for observing the rules of avoidance. Both sexes cherish their woven armlets, necklaces, and other ornaments, their pipes, and their decorated lime-pots, though these are now giving place to tins obtained from the white man. Most people now possess trade knives for cutting bush, weeding, &c., and some few also axes and adzes. This makes no claim to be an exhaustive list of personal possessions, but it does, I think, include the bulk of them. Although these people take pleasure in ownership, and are as delighted as children at the acquisition of, say, a specially large or good knife (I have seen a man doing a dance of joy at one which I had given him) or a string of beads, they do not seem to strive particularly to amass quantities of possessions, beyond what they need for their own use. 'Riches' consist of ceremonial currency and pigs, everything else is incidental. Ornamented spears used to rank in this category, and still do in the central mountain districts, there forming part of the transactions connected with marriage, as do also stone axes, which are no longer valued in the coastal districts.

Records of possessions.

To keep a record of the number of coco-nut trees owned by the inhabitants of the village, bundles of the stiff centre rib of the coco-nut leaf frond are kept, containing one rib for each tree. A tally of pigs is kept by making notches on a stick. All the pigs belonging to the village are recorded—or are supposed to be recorded—on one stick, but this does not mean that they are communally owned. These records are required by the Government and the bundles and sticks are given to the District Officer at his official visit. I do not think any record would be kept except for this requirement, and its accuracy is open to considerable doubt.

ATTITUDE TO THEFT

To steal ceremonial currency made of teeth (*imuse*) is a major offence, one of the two such offences recognized by these people, the other being to take another man's wife, for which the same word (*a mat*) is used. The customary punishment is that the convicted person shall be taken to the beach and all who wish shall have the right to shoot at him with spears and arrows. He is,